



CRAIG HICKMAN 2022-05-13

NICK LAND AND TELEOPLEXY – THE SCHIZOANALYSIS OF ACCELERATION

ECONOFICTION,
MASHINES

ACCELERATIONISM, CAPITAL, TECHNOLOGY, TECHNOVIRUS,
TELEOPLEXY

"The 'dominion of capital' is an accomplished teleological catastrophe, robot rebellion, or shoggothic insurgency, through which intensively escalating instrumentality has inverted natural process into a monstrous reign of the tool."

– Nick Land, *Teleoplexy: Notes on Acceleration*

“Socialism has typically been a nostalgic diatribe against underdeveloped capitalism, finding its eschatological soap-boxes amongst the relics of precapitalist territorialities.”

– Nick Land, *‘Machinic Desire,’ Fanged Noumena, 340*

Before I discuss Nick Land and his essay in the new #Acceleration reader I want to investigate the temporal dimension of modernity. The impact of technological change and its impact on society over the past few hundred years has been one of the central motifs of both modernity and its sociological theorists. The classic sociologists Montesquieu, Comte, Tocqueville, Marx, Pareto, Weber, and Durkheim each developed an aspect of this theme, while at the same time emphasizing different philosophical frameworks within which to expose modernity and the impact of technological change on society. But one thing is for certain all were concerned with the sources of human action and the constraints placed on it by the technology and politico-ethical dimensions of the day.

One way of understanding the structure of human action and behavior is within the temporal patterns that have effected change across society in both our everyday lives, work, and politics. The temporal regimes that grew out of classical era sociology dealt with what Michael Foucault has documented so well as the *disciplinary society*, while in our own time of the Network Society we confront what Deleuze toward the end of his life termed Control Society.* (see notes) As Hartmut Rosa will define it: “It is not just that virtually all aspects of life can be insightfully approached from a temporal perspective, but furthermore, temporal structures connect the micro- to the macro- levels of society (i.e., our actions and orientations are coordinated and made compatible to the ‘systemic imperatives’ of modern capitalist societies through temporal norms, deadlines, and regulations.),”¹ Rosa differentiates between mechanical acceleration, the acceleration of social change and the accelerating pace of daily life. The process of mechanical acceleration began in the 19th century in conjunction with industrialization. His definition of social change utilizes a term that originally stems from Marxism: alienation. But Rosa’s criticism is not directed against capitalist production conditions (unlike earlier critics of industrial modernity, Rosa’s focus is not on labor), but against *acceleration as a resulting meta-phenomenon*.

As he states it late capitalism is based on a static form of acceleration: “Run, run always faster, not to reach an objective, but to maintain the status quo, to simply remain in the same place.” Much like Paul Virilio who would realize his on conceptions of instantaneity, Rosa will tell us that as the pace of material, economic, and cultural life becomes ever faster, as we have conquered the instantaneity of information exchange and acquired the possibility of travelling at speeds hitherto unimaginable, we have the impression that nothing is moving, that we are simply walking on a treadmill.

It is this form of speed that Mark Fisher as Arran James and Emund Berger in their respective posts (here and here) will relate to. Edmund proposes two different registers of time to correspond with Fisher’s two registers of speed:

The **first** of these is *machinic time*; quite literally the time in which the mechanosphere operates, it is an inhuman time scale, composed of the high speed trading machines and computer

processors, satellite relays, unimaginable feedback loops cutting through everything from an individual's purchases to the fluctuations of large-scale social structures. Machinic time exists within the dense trappings of our networked world; it is a time that *swarms* over the face of the globe its operations as a *smoothing* force. Machinic time is the time of information itself, and its concern is not necessarily the physical. It exists within and is the ether.

The **second** register of time is a *striating* force – *contained time*. This is the division and regulation of a body's time, particularly in the context of disciplinary spaces that seek to make the bodies docile for the maximization of production. It brings to mind the classic tripartite division of the day's 24 hours: 8 hours of work/8 hours of leisure/8 hours of sleep. Of course this division was only an idealized plan, the orientation of the individual's rhythm to the megamachine that it finds itself subsumed in. Particularly today we find the blurring breakdown of these divisions into a perpetual flowspace of time, 24/7 capitalism. Yet we still find that time itself is an entity to be regulated and managed in a way that is internalized by the self – a steady rhythm to ensure and maintain the proper functioning of the machine.

This notion of an *artificial time (machinic)* and its *natural variant (contained)* in a dialectical or diacritical interplay as part of the ongoing process of our current views of boredom and anxiety are excellent notions. Rosa on the other hand will leave the conceptual nature of time to the philosophers and instead focuses on its effects it has had on the political, ethical, cultural, and social consequences—of the rupture that is produced between “classic” modernity, the modernity of “progress,” happening in a linear manner and directed towards a better time, and the “postmodernity”, in which time is no longer seen as a course moving towards a pre-determined objective, but as an instantaneous flux flowing towards a direction that remains uncertain. The idea of acceleration was born with modernity, but we can discern two great periods or two distinct sequences. The first sequence aligns with the Industrial Age and the regulatory practices instigated by the mechanistic use of clock-time and linear progression or progress, while the second issued out of late modernism and became the “timeless time” or instantaneity (Virilio) , an incessant deluge of de-territorialised flows (of capital, goods, people, ideas, as well as diseases and risks), which are springing up everywhere. Events no longer happen in sequence but simultaneously, “placing society in an eternally ephemeral state”.²

As Arran James will say of accelerationism “Fundamentally, the question of boredom leads me to think about accelerationism as a kind of electroshock therapy from the depressive body of the left. It is the political use of stimulation to rouse us to challenge the hegemony of those who monopolise stimulation as a technique for control. Accelerationism thus has very little to do with speeding up or slowing down as such. Accelerationism is thus also an attempt to *shock* some life back into what it sees as a comatose revolutionary movement. (here)”

Nick Land – Teleoplexy – Notes on Acceleration

‘If there are places to which we are forbidden to go, it is because they can in truth be reached, or because they can reach us. In the end poetry is invasion and not expression.’ – Nick Land

Before charting the course or navigating the cartographic mappings of Landian *teleoplexy*

one should be reminded by the cautionary note of the editors of *Fanged Noumena* on his writing style: “Modelled on cyberpunk, which Land recognises as a textual machine for affecting reality by intensifying the anticipation of its future, his textual experiments aim to ‘flatten’ writing onto its referent. Feeding back from the future which they ‘speculate’ into the present in which they intervene, these texts trans-valuate ‘hype’ as a positive condition to which they increasingly aspire, collapsing sci-fi into catalytic efficiency, ‘re-routing tomorrow through what its prospect [...] makes today.”⁴

So the myth might go: Capitalism leads to a grand mal seizure or a traumatized catastrophism set in motion by an accelerating engine of temporal regimes registered on differing nodes at invariant rates of speed: some fast, some slow; some forward, some backward; all colliding in the instantaneous moment of – hyper- (Lipovetsky), liquid- (Bauman), global- (Giddens), rationalized- (Weber and Habermas), functional (Durkheim to Luhmann), and/or identitarian- (Simmel to Beck) modernity.

In his usual inimical and cryptic style of compression Land will in his essay *Teleoplexy – Notes on Acceleration* remark that: “Acceleration is technomic time” (511).³ He will offer a neologism to marshal the effects of this time: *Teleoplexy*: “At once a deuteron-teleology, repurposing purpose on purpose; an inverted teleology; and a self-reflexively complicated teleology; teleoplexy is also an emergent teleology (indistinguishable from natural – scientific ‘teleonomy’); and a simulation of teleology – dissolving even super-teleological processes into fall-out from the topology of time. ‘Like a speed or a temperature’ any teleoplexy is an intensive magnitude or non-uniform quantity, heterogenized by catastrophes, it is indistinguishable from intelligence. Accelerationism has eventually to measure it (or disintegrate trying). (514).

00. He will rely on the work of Eugen Böhm Ritter von Bawerk whose critiques of Marxism in essays and his magnum opus ***Capital and Interest***. In this work Böhm-Bawerk built upon the time preference ideas of Carl Menger founder of the Austrian School of Economics, insisting that there is always a difference in value between present goods and future goods of equal quality, quantity, and form. Furthermore, the value of future goods diminishes as the length of time necessary for their completion increases. As Land would put it ‘Acceleration’ as he uses it follows Böhm-Bawerk model of capitalization, in which saving and technicity are integrated within a single social process – diversion of resources from immediate consumption into the enhancement of productive apparatus (511).

As Böhm-Bawerk will say:

The disadvantage connected with the capitalist method of production is its sacrifice of time. The roundabout ways of capital are fruitful but long; they procure us more or better consumption goods, but only at a later period of time. This proposition, no less than the former, is one of the ground pillars of the theory of capital. We shall see later on that the very function of capital, as a means of appropriation or source of interest, to a great extent rests upon it. (82-83) 3

Land will imply that under the historical conditions of acceleration the typical co-components of

capital, technology, and economics will have limited effect and duration, and that instead the twin-dynamic of what he terms the technomic or cross-excited commercial sphere is in the driver's seat: the engine or motor that drives the capitalist system.

01. Using a cartography of modernity in which accelerationism is patterned on cybernetic theory he will map it through its circuitry interface of either explosions or traps: accelerationism itself will map modernity as pure shock (explosive). What Arran James said in his article for the Left might be interjected here, too: "Accelerationism is thus also an attempt to *shock* some life back into what it sees as a comatose revolutionary movement." Weird that the libertarian tradition and the sense of temporality being developed by the left Accelerationists should in some way coincide and agree on this one point.

02. Land will tell us that for capitalism the notion of uncontrolled explosions (anarchy) are dangerous, but that controlled explosions are necessary: the need for governance and regulation of the explosive power of modernity.

03 – 07. In this third section one needs to tease out the meaning from a developed sense of Land's writings otherwise the cryptic compressed style will leave one shaking one's fist in confusion. In this section its as if Confucius had suddenly been reincarnated as a cybernetic theorist an was relaying his axiomatic ethics in a minimalistic discourse to the inner circle of his slow learners. He will teach them the law of the *compensator*: this it the law of teleological malignancy. The primordial which up to modernity came first became last under the regime of techonomic finality. As Land will put it: Accelerationism comes down to the "perennial critique of modernity, which is to say the final stance of man" (513). As Robin Mackay & Ray Brassier will add from *Fanged Noumena*: "*Organisation is suppression*, Land caustically insists, against those who would align schizoanalysis with the inane celebrants of autopoiesis. Understood as a manifestation of the death-drive, destratification need no longer be hemmed in by the equilibria proper to the systems through which it manifests itself: we do not yet know what death can do" (FN, KL 480).

08 – 10. Land marks out the complex of the infosphere within which technological intelligence begins to take over from the human as the laboring force of late modernity, it performs the task of alien agent or teleoplexic space or environment within which capitalism no longer has an outside but has become the artificial immanence within which all our onlife actions take place. As he remarks: "Accelerationism has a real object only insofar as there is a *teleoplexic thing*, which is to say: insofar as capitalization is natural-historical reality" (514). This new teleoplexic environment that is re-engineering both us and our society as well as the infrastructure of our planetary base (which he tells us need not be thought) is what might be termed *teleospheric ordinal* – a numeric set of layered spaces that incorporate the territory and the map seamlessly (i.e., the *teleoplexic thing*). This is not some virtual cyberspace, but is the total encompassment of our global environment in which we and our artificial companions live, and future generations will spend more and more time in that environment, and if we look at individuals as these informational agents, agents that like fish in water can swim in the teleosphere much more easily, that's their environment, that's where they find themselves at home.

Yet, as an economic phenomenon accelerationism will discover a problem Land remarks: “Minimally, the accelerationist formulation of a rigorous techonomic naturalism involves it in a tripartite problematic, complicated by commercial relativism; historical virtuality; and systematic reflexivity” (514-515).

11 – 18 Landian Economics 101. In these sections Land is still bound to an older probabilistic universe of potentialities, possibilities, and stochastic mathematics that may need an updating to the contingencies of a later speculative reasoning. When he tells us that capitalization is ... indistinguishable from commercialization of potentials, through which modern history is slanted (teleplexically) in the direction of greater virtualization (semiotization), operationalizing science fiction scenarios as integral components of production systems” (515). And, then, tells us that values which do not exist ‘yet’, except as probabilistic estimations, or risk structures, acquire a power of command over economic (and therefore social) processes, necessarily devalorizing the actual (515-516), I want to ask him if he’s read his Meillassoux and Élie Ayache’s *The Blank Swan* of late. In an essay on contingency Ayache (*The Medium of Contingency*) would remark: “If contingency is to be thought absolutely, it must be thought independently of the map of possibilities.” He talks of an ‘economic physics’: “*Physics (instead of metaphysics) can be our guide, because quantum mechanics acts precisely at the level where the range of possible states is not yet decided. It strikes behind the scene where things are, precisely at the hinge where they can be. It is not in probability that absolute contingency will find its right mediation or translation, but in a material medium that will replace probability altogether. Consequently, the necessity of contingency will no longer be intellectual but will become plainly material speculative thought having itself undergone the same material exchange as the one granting the proper translation of the strike of contingency.*” (see *The Blank Swan: The End of Probability* (London: Wiley, 2010))

I would offer that Land’s teleoplexy is just such a medium, and should be situated outside of an economics of probabilistic or stochastic statistical measurement which is always looking at historical or past data rather than present and future forecasting on contingencies of the market. Caught in the probabilistic loop of estimations and reflexive historical data one can understand why Land would see a recursion in accelerationism toward becoming progressively entangled in teleplexic self-evaluation, thereby producing the “basic characteristics of a terminal identity crisis” (516). As Ayache will remind us “Probability is backward because it steps back from a possible real to a mixed (and improper) real. It has to mesh its backward travels in a tree of possibilities and has to go through a (temporal) process. The tree is prone to instability, as the implausibility of the possible and the strain it constantly exerts on the thought of the real are propagated throughout its nodes. Not to mention that it is vulnerable to the strike of contingency, which may very well shake the whole tree from outside. The price process, by contrast, propagates forward, from real to real.”

Yet, it is at this point that Land will ask: *What would be required for teleoplexy to realistically evaluate itself – or to ‘attain self-awareness’ as the pulp cyber-horror scenario describes it?* Land will offer us his secret future of the AI Intelligence technogenesis: “Within a monetary system

configured in ways not yet determinate with confidence, but almost certainly tilted radically towards depoliticization and crypto-digital distribution, it would discover prices consistent with its own maximally-accelerated technogenesis, channeling capital into mechanical automatization, self-replication, self-improvement, and escape into intelligence explosion" (517). In other words it will use all the tools of capitalism at its disposal to begin evolving into and naturalizing the teleoplexic environments of the infosphere. If anything accelerationism is a tracking device for this advanced hyper-cognitive explosion of intelligence: "Irrespective of ideological alignment, accelerationism advances only through its ability to track such a development, whether to confirm or disconfirm the teleoplexic expectation of Technomic Singularity" (517).

A Philosophy of Camouflage

Economics needs to be *hedged*. The notion of "*hedging your bets*" would entail demasking the technomic processes that underlay the legal apparatus of the neoliberal order which "misconstrue legal definitions of personhood, agency, and property" that are channeled within the financial networks as automization/automation of capital in terms of a profoundly defective concept of ownership" (518). Land says our current financial legal systems hide and mask through covert dictates the use of such fictitious legal fictions as corporations as identities and agencies, and that these legal entities pave the way for "technomic modifications of business structures" that current critical methodologies completely overlook through "general cultural inertia" thereby allowing for the "systematic misrecognition of emergent teleoplexic agencies" (518). Our current critical enterprises are looking down the wrong rabbit hole: Alice flew the coop and the AI's have emerged in the Red Queen's guise.

He hits a point home about stochastic forecasting and mathematical models based on probabilistic theorems when he says: "Regardless of trends in Internet-supported social surveillance, the ability of economic-statistical institutions to register developments in micro-capitalism merits extraordinary skepticism" (519). But what of those like Ayache with contingency economics or even Fernando Zalamea with his integral synthetic mathematics of categories? Even the Chinese scholar Yann Moulier Boutang in his work *Cognitive Capitalism* of going beyond the probabilistic universe that has held sway in economics for since the 1930's.

Land admits that many factors may come into play that might mask a Technomic Singularity as well: large digital networks, business corporations, research institutions, cities, and states. With this whole new influx of smart technologies being hyped by IBM and CISCO and other companies as the next great infrastructural economy one wonders. Even such agencies as the NSA with their large investment in data surveillance and intelligence systems might, he tells us, be the origin point of this singularity. He does mention the interventions of a Left Accelerationism: "It is ... possible that some instance of intermediate individuation – most obviously the state – could be strategically invested by a Left Accelerationism, precisely in order to submit the virtual-teleoplexic lineage of Terrestrial Capitalism (or Technomic Singularity) to effacement and disruption" (519). After reading Brassier of late I'd not count on it, it seems that some form of positive relation to a Technomic Singularity is foreseen and even planned in both Ray Brassier's *Prometheanism* and Reza Negerestani's *Inhumanism*. I think there is an open

ended movement toward some form of a crossing of the cognitive rubicon in both of these philosophers, who may or may not convince others of the Left?

20. In this final section Land admits that such a Technomic Singularity is not something we can even undertake on our own. In fact it might even seem an “impossible project” one that will ultimately be resolved and accomplished by the very activity of the teleoplexic hyper-intelligence itself, through its own crossing of the cognitive rubicon, by way of its own processes rather than through any human agency or intervention. As Land admits the difficulty and complexity of such a Technomic Singularity must be approached through anticipating the *“terms of its eventual self-reflexion – the techonomic currency through which the history of modernity can, for the first time, be adequately denominated. It has no alternative but to fund its own investigation, in units of destiny or doom, camouflaged within the system of quotidian economic signs, yet rigorously extractable, given only the correct cryptographic keys. Accelerationism exists only because this task has been automatically allotted to it. Fate has a name (but no face)”* (520).

Addendum (6/15/2014):

For Land the *technovirus* has already done its work, we are all already infested and infestations of the teleoplexic space, derivatives of a complex inforg that envelopes the planet in its shaggothic tentacles like some H.P. Lovecraft ancient come back from the future to disperse its seeds of darkness among a new progeny, a cybernetic genome that will eventually give birth to the true heirs of this planetary civilization: the artificial intelligence systems arising in our midst. Yet, as he tells us we do have weapons at our disposal: our minds ignited by the residual systems of reason and imagination powered by a new vigilant paranoia or schizoanalysis of the massive systems of data in our midst might just begin to catch the sleeping giant before it wakes. Time will only tell.

Ours is a time of what *is* becoming what can *be*...

“Dibbomese sorcery does not seem to be at all interested in judgements as to truth or falsity. It appears rather to estimate in each case the potential to make real, saying typically ‘perhaps it can become so’ ...” – Nick Land, Origins of the Cthulhu Club

-
1. Hartmut Rosa. *Alienation and Acceleration Toward a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* (NSE press, 2013)
 2. Pierre Milliard. *Hartmut Rosa: The acceleration of time* (EuropaStar, 2012)
 3. Eugen Böhm Ritter von Bawerk. *The Positive Theory of Capital*. (1930 G. E. STECHERT & CO. NEW YORK)
 4. Land, Nick (2013-07-01). *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987 – 2007* (Kindle Locations 502-505). Urbanomic/Sequence Press. Kindle Edition.

* Notes: In some excellent essays dealing with temporality as speed and acceleration both Arran James and Edmund Berger both deal with the how these regimes of temporality condition human action or behavior through the concepts of boredom and anxiety (see no boredom and

Boredom/Anxiety/Time/Scales)

taken from here

Foto: Sylvia John

[< PREVIOUS](#) [NEXT >](#)

META

CONTACT

FORCE-INC/MILLE PLATEAUX

IMPRESSUM

DATENSCHUTZERKLÄRUNG

TAXONOMY

CATEGORIES

TAGS

AUTHORS

ALL INPUT

SOCIAL

FACEBOOK

INSTAGRAM

TWITTER